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THE CAUSES  
OF THE  
PROSPERITY OF NEW-YORK.



BY  
WILLIAM BETTS, LL. D.



THE CAUSES OF THE PROSPERITY OF NEW-YORK.

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AN

ANNIVERSARY ADDRESS,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

St. Nicholas Society of New-York,

DECEMBER 3<sup>d</sup>, 1850.

BY WILLIAM BETTS, LL. D.

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*Cui genus à proavis ingens, clarumque paternæ  
Nomen erat virtutis.—Æn. 12. 225.*



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NEW-YORK, Dec. 7th, 1850.

DEAR SIR:

I have the honor to hand you herewith a Resolution passed by the St. Nicholas Society at their Anniversary Meeting yesterday, and to express the hope that you will be pleased to comply with the same.

With great respect,

Your obedient servant,

CHARLES R. SWORDS,

*Secretary.*

On motion of CHIEF JUSTICE JONES,

*Resolved*, That the thanks of this Society are justly due, and are hereby tendered to WM. BETTS, Esq., for the able and eloquent address delivered before them on the 3d instant, and that he be requested to furnish a copy of the same for preservation by the Society.



## ANNIVERSARY ADDRESS.

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It gives me pleasure, Mr. President, on this annual occasion, to salute you, our Head ; and you, fellow-members, associated and assembled in this our ancestral city ; and you, my fair country-women, the mothers and sisters, wives and daughters, of the descendants of those respectable men, whose names we bear, and whose memories we delight to honor. Placed in the midst of a vast and ever-increasing population, you occupy a peculiar position. Beneath your paternal roofs, and beside your paternal fire-sides ; with the grave-stones of your progenitors for generations, clustering all around you ; you present the singular spectacle of being strangers in your native home. So rapid has been the growth of this crowded metropolis ; so immense the stream of emigration perpetually poured upon it, from every quarter, at home and abroad ; so constant and increasing have been the changes ; that an absence of five and twenty years, would render the recognition of the place of your nativity, or your childhood, no easy task. It may be that this peculiar position imposes

peculiar duties. It may be that the vastness of the physical advantages bestowed on you, may bear in their train corresponding responsibilities : and while indulging in a few reflections appropriate to the occasion, upon the foundation and causes of our great and growing population, it may not be unbecoming to inquire, whether this prosperity does not impose proportionate duties, as well on you, the old and peculiar people, as on that much larger class, who enjoy a temporary residence, or have established a permanent home among us : and whether those duties have been adequately performed. In taking this course, it will be observed, that I have ventured to diverge from the usual roads of historical or traditional incidents : but it seemed to me, that it would not be un instructive to pause and contemplate our present position ; to inquire calmly how and why we have attained it ; from the experience of the past to gather wisdom for the future ; to see whether we have done all that is required for improving and preserving our advantages ; and, if we have not done all, to ascertain what remains undone ; and apply all our diligence and energy to supply what may be wanting, and to remedy what may be defective.

When, in the month of September of the year 1609, nearly two hundred and fifty years ago, the weary and sea-worn bark of Hudson rounded the low, sandy point that guards the narrow entrance to this port, and proceeded northwards through the opening waters, we may easily imagine the delight



with which he watched the rich and wooded heights and ever-varying shores of Mattowaques\* upon his right; while from the rising hills of Aquahonga,† on his left, was poured a flood of sweet autumnal fragrance, "a stream of rich distill'd perfumes," which to his weary senses might have seemed

"Sabeian odors from the spicy shores  
Of Araby the blest."

And when, after penetrating through the narrow passage, the broad sheet of the expanding waters burst upon his eyes, with its three streams pushing onwards to the north, the westward, and the east, studded with islands and bold projections, in all their natural magnificence and beauty, untouched by the hand of man, unmarred by the desecrations of art—to comprehend his feelings, we must transport ourselves back to him and his companions; and, sitting on the deck of the little yacht, Half-Moon, while its prow is slowly dashing before it the sparkling waters, we may sympathize with the mingled and tumultuous emotions which must at once have roused, delighted, and bewildered him. Looking upon the tranquil surface of the unpeopled wave; regarding the almost complete solitude of the surrounding shores; little could he have anticipated, that the broadest of those streams, ennobled with his name, should bear upon its ample bosom thousands and thousands of swift barks, wafted by the winds, or propelled by an unknown power that after ages

\* Nassau, or Long Island.

† Staten Island.

should call into existence, freighted with the universal products of the globe. Little could he have foreseen the forests of masts and myriads of edifices which should thereafter cluster and crowd upon and around that calm and solitary point, which lay, the image of repose, amidst its gentle waters; little imagine the spires, towers and domes that should rise above its roofs; or the cares, crimes and remorse, the agonies and never-resting struggles, beneath them; little, that on this spot, in brief, would be the mighty metropolis of a mighty Empire, powerful for good, or fearfully powerful for evil, as the virtues or the vices of its inhabitants might control its destinies.

A century afterwards, could the daring adventurer have revisited the scene of his discovery, he would have observed no striking alteration in its condition. The early progress of the city and colony was slow, and gave no promise of the immense development they have since exhibited. Like the solid and enduring oak, so gradual was their growth, that it seemed unlikely that they ever would attain substantial strength or magnitude. In the year 1709, New Amsterdam was still a village; its population did not exceed five thousand persons, one-sixth of whom were slaves.\* Fifty years afterwards, it had barely risen to thirteen thousand in the whole, including a similar proportion of blacks.† At this time the whole population of the ten counties of the State was less than one hundred thousand persons. It had

\* 1 Doc. Hist. N. Y., p. 691.

† 1 Doc. Hist. N. Y., p. 696.

required nearly one hundred and fifty years to reach this point; but so rapid from that time forward began to be the increase, that twenty years more saw its numbers doubled; and from that period, the State and more especially the City, have sprung forward, until the latter has attained the prodigious size, strength and importance which we now see, and is yet proceeding onwards with strides more vast and gigantic than any which have gone before.

The causes which have produced these results, exist both within and without ourselves. Those without, arising from the peculiar situation and circumstances of foreign countries, it is not my purpose to discuss. Of those within, I shall confine the few and brief observations I propose to make, to the influence of *four* causes:—the Geographical Position of this city; the Old Colonial races; the Manners of the colonists; and the System of Laws and Government. These, if I mistake not, will be found to be the elements of the physical prosperity of our community.

A temperate climate, a wholesome neighborhood, a fruitful soil, useful and abundant products, would make themselves felt in the steady and gradual growth of an agricultural people; but the super-added advantages of a capacious and secure harbor, accessible at all times, and possessing extensive and easy communication with the coast and the interior, would not be sensibly perceived, until a large and industrious population had made it a convenient centre of commerce. These circumstances, although essential to commercial greatness, are rather necessary

means, than active causes. The Island of Malta possesses similar advantages in an eminent degree ; and yet upon its splendid harbor stands no imperial seat of commerce. The natural superiority of Alexandria existed before the eagle eye of the Macedonian conqueror espied it ; and yet, no effect was produced, until his sagacious mind applied the proper means for its development : and in many commercial places, which it would be needless to mention, trade has declined, and prosperity faded away, when the geographical and physical circumstances, under which they rose and flourished, remained in all respects unaltered. The central and commanding position of this city, in the midst of the advantages before recited, united with its peculiar capacity for establishing a cluster of trading cities all around, although greatly contributing to its majestic growth, could not alone have produced it. Its peculiar adaptation to the acquisition of wealth, no doubt, attracted many to it, and operated strongly to draw hitherward the stream of emigration. Other causes, of a deeper nature, sustained and swelled the flood ; and those were, as has been previously mentioned, the People or Races who planted and settled the colony ; the manners, dispositions and morals which prevailed among them ; and the laws and institutions which they here established.

The precise point of time at which the people of this City and its vicinity attained that maturity, and assumed those characteristics, which distinguish them from all the other people of the New World,



and which, in connection with their physical position and their political and moral organization, have drawn to them an immense population and a commanding commerce, cannot be fixed with any minute exactness; but the beginning of the Eighteenth century, (or a period stretching from the year 1700 to the year 1750,) may be safely taken as finding them possessing an accurate and defined national character. About this time the City and province may be considered as having assumed a historical attitude. The Dutch government, which essentially terminated in 1664, had been, in a degree, ambiguous and indefinite; the mode in which it was subordinate to the home sovereignty, and the extent of that sovereignty having been little understood. Emerging from that condition to the Proprietary government of the Duke of York, the principles on which it should be conducted were equally obscure: but at the period, which I have named, the Ducal had been converted into a Royal government; and the pretensions of the Royal governors, who acted solely and simply under commissions from the crown, although extravagant and inadmissible, had at least the merit of being perfectly intelligible. At that period, legislation had assumed substantially the same form which it bears at the present time; and the judicial system was conducted upon the same great principles which still continue to control it. The People may therefore be said *then* to have attained a decided character; one, which was to stamp its impress on the place, and on posterity; one, by which it was to stand, or

fall ; one, which should attract, or repel, emigration ; and one, the excellence or defects of which might fairly be measured by its results.

The Races, whose combination formed this character, were, as is well known, mainly derived from Holland and from England ; the admixture of French which was, at a then recent period, infused, having happily contributed to it a greater universality. It is curious to observe how closely the Dutch and the English were connected, in the discovery, settlement, and peopling of this colony. The *English* claimed sovereignty over it, from the *general* discoveries of Cabot ; the *Dutch*, from the *specific* voyage of Hudson. The expedition of 1609 was of Dutch origin, conducted under Dutch authority, at Dutch risk, and for Dutch benefit : the Commander of that expedition was an Englishman. The crew of the *Half-Moon*, probably the first European vessel which ever entered these waters, and the first of the entry of which there is unquestionable evidence,\* was composed of both Dutch and English ; and in an old narrative, the settlement on this island is described as being, in the year 1648, “a pretty town of trade, having more English than Dutch.”†

As the Colony increased in numbers, the numerical proportion of the people of both races continued to be not dissimilar. The eastern part of Long Island was wholly English ; the western, Dutch ; in

\* Note 1, *post*.

† Description of New Albion, 1648. See 1 N. Y. Hist. Coll., New Series, p. 335.

the middle portion they were intermingled, the English preponderating in the north, and the Dutch in the south; and as names of places may be considered as historical indexes of their inhabitants, especially in colonies, it may be remarked that the Eastern names were adopted from England; the western from Holland; while in the middle, where the races intermingled, the names fluctuated; and we find, among others, the old Dutch appellation of Middleborough yielding to the modern name of New Town, and Rusdorpe absorbed in the euphonious Indian Yameco, most barbarously and unmeaningly anglicized into Jamaica:\* and we may add, that in the ducal assembly convened at Hempstead in 1665, which enacted or compiled a Book of Laws† long afterwards used as the code of the provinces, the deputies or delegates of the several towns were of both Dutch and English origin; some of them progenitors of families who yet remain prominent among us.‡

In this City, the population was both Dutch and English; while near the head of the navigable waters of the Hudson, the settlements were purely of the former people. The Dutch and English races, therefore, with an infusion of the French, were the stock whose mingled mass composed, at the period which I have indicated, the first half of the eighteenth century, the population of this City and its vicinity. It may not be uninteresting to glance at

\* Thompson's Long Island.

† Gov. Andros' Rep., 1678. 1 Doc. Hist. N. Y., 88, 89.

‡ Wood's Long Island.

the circumstances—and a bare glance is all that can be allowed—which contributed to produce from these materials a new and peculiar people.

The Dutch are a people not unknown in the classic annals of antiquity. Their fame and their achievements are embalmed in the page of the historian Tacitus, who celebrates their virtue and their valor. “The Batavians, a Cattian tribe,”\* says this observant and acute writer, “are distinguished among the neighboring nations for their valor. Incorporated into the Roman Empire, they still preserve their integrity and civilization;” and so great was the reputation which they acquired for skill and bravery in the Germanic wars, that Batavian cohorts, or Dutch regiments, were employed by the Romans in their fearful conflicts with the Britons. Nor did they fail, in those fierce and dreadful wars, to sustain and increase the reputation which they had formerly acquired. In the Seventeenth century, the countrymen of Tromp and De Ruyter had not degenerated from the warlike qualities of their Batavian ancestors; and in the gentler incidents of peace, industry, perseverance, energy, honesty, and enterprize, the people of the States-General were surpassed by no European community. Their then thriving and extensive colonies exhibited their skill, commercial genius, and activity in the business of life; the finish, the exactness and perfection of their pictorial works, displayed the delicacy of their taste, and their progress in the refined arts; and their intellectual elevation was

\* Tac. Germania, c. 29.

attested by the productions of such minds as those of Wicquefort, Bynkershoek, and Grotius: the two latter of whom particularly, different as they were in the tone and temper of their minds, and character of their reasoning; yet, by their combined power, restored to order and system the chaos of public law on which Europe had been wildly tost, and kindled into a broad and bright blaze those flickerings and glimmerings of national rights and duties which had been feebly burning in Italy and England.\* Of Hugh De Groot, who, in accordance with the fashion of the times, assumed the name of Grotius, it may be deemed presumptuous that so humble an individual should speak at all. But the descendants of his countrymen may not be displeased at a passing tribute to the merit and the memory of one who added to the qualities of an accomplished scholar, a profound philosopher, and an enlightened publicist, the attainments of a learned theologian, and the devotion of a sincere and humble Christian. To estimate the merit of Hugo Grotius, we should, if possible, identify ourselves with his position; and thus only will we be enabled to perceive the great abilities, indomitable energy, unfaltering courage, and thorough conviction of right, which enabled him to produce, promulgate and establish a system by which power should be controlled by right; the excesses of anger and violence restrained; the maxim reversed, that laws are silent amid arms; war itself subjected to salutary rules; and nations, however

\* Note 2.

potent or ambitious, taught that their interest as well as their duty compelled them to bow to the requirements of justice and of mercy. The great work of this eminent jurist has established him as the father of modern Public Law; and, as might have been expected, his conspicuous position has exposed him to no small measure both of censure and of praise. Gentle as was his nature, he sometimes allowed a degree of severity that more modern axioms would discountenance, and more modern usage has disallowed; but in those cases, he seems rather to have yielded to authority than conviction; and the benevolent principle which pervades his system harmonizes with the more humane practices of modern times. The exuberance of his intellectual treasures, and the profusion with which he pours them forth, invoking all ancient and modern literature, philosophy, and history sacred and profane, to sustain and illustrate his theories and reasonings, while they instruct and delight, almost bewilder the student; and we are left at a loss whether most to wonder at the industry which could acquire such an affluence of knowledge, at the memory which could retain and reproduce it, or at the order and judgment which could direct so masterly an adaptation to the object had in view. Such men exhibit the genius of the nation; and the character of the Dutch was thus in fact distinguished for advancement in the useful arts, for refinement, and for intellectual superiority, more particularly in those branches which tend to reform, regulate and elevate the intercourse of na-



tions; and such may be supposed to have been the general character of the colonists at a corresponding period.

Nor were the circumstances of the English colonists less peculiar. The distracted state of England, from the reign of the first James to the accession of Anne, is well known. The changes in the religion of the country had disturbed the lethargy of ages, and had provoked inquiry, and produced restlessness just in proportion to the indifference which had formerly prevailed. Diversities of opinion existed in regard to the extent of the reforms: and these diversities, as is too usual, were pressed with little temper or moderation, and grew wider and wider, until at length they became incapable of being reconciled. Questions of civil polity soon sprung from these religious dissensions: the sacred rights of conscience, (rights often vague, mysterious and unintelligible,) were invoked to justify the intemperate conduct of both parties; and the contest naturally led to those appalling scenes which deluged the kingdom in blood during the reign of the first Charles, and which began to subside, only when, in the persons of William and of Mary, England and Holland sat side by side upon the ancient throne of Alfred. Whatever difference of opinion may exist among the men of the present day—and certain it is, that few, even now, contemplate the proceedings of those stirring times without a partisan bias—whatever diversities of judgment may now exist as to the actors and the actions of that exciting period, none can

doubt, that it was a time of most extraordinary intellectual activity and energy. The edifice of political society was overthrown; the foundation which supported it, upheaved; and every part of the ground on which it stood, minutely scrutinized. Antiquity ceased to be respectable simply because it was ancient; and men began to inquire, whether old things were right, with a violence and passion unbecoming alike to the persons and the subject. The men of that age were, of necessity, forced to be thinking men. In the agitations which then convulsed society, no man was allowed to remain neutral. He was compelled to join one or the other faction, under the penalty of becoming odious and contemptible to both. Under those circumstances, the country teemed with men of action and of thought: and *just those men* came over to our shores, to co-operate with the Netherlanders in the settlement of this colony. Let it not be supposed that they came here with revolutionary ideas, or lawless desires. The very violence of the parties abroad had resulted from a thorough conviction that each was right; and they brought hither with them, united with a bold independence of thought, a thorough conviction of the requirements of duty. The deplorable scenes which they and their fathers had witnessed had sickened them of dissensions, and made them long for quiet; and although they well understood their own rights as men, and were prepared, when injured, to sustain and vindicate them, they likewise knew and respected the rights of others; and from the calamities of war they

had learned to value the blessings of repose. Such was the character of the second race, whose cotemporaneous emigration peopled these shores. Bold, intelligent, inquiring, just, and pacific; emerging from a long struggle, with a thorough appreciation of *their rights, as men, citizens and subjects*, they were well adapted to amalgamate with a people, from whom had sprung a system which thoroughly comprehended and strongly enforced *the rights and duties of men, as members of a family of nations*.

There was still a third element wanting to produce the peculiar combination of character which we suppose here to exist; and that element we imagine can be found in the persecuted emigrants from France. The religious agitations and excesses of that country had driven from it large numbers of its most excellent and estimable people; many of whom took refuge in Holland and in England; and some reached our distant shores. The character of those people is shown by their history. Intelligent and discriminating, they had been able to distinguish between ancient errors and ancient faith; and in choosing the latter, they had the courage to endure imprisonment, torture, and death, rather than abandon vital truths: and when driven at length, by bloody and faithless persecution, into exile, they brought with them the clear heads, pure minds, and bold hearts, which had produced their expatriation, and which qualified them to endure it.

Here then we find the three sources of the peculiar character of our people; a character which, from

the variety and combination of its elements, very early ceased to be provincial; and assumed a metropolitan appearance quite out of proportion to the actual dimensions of the place. It becomes the Descendants of the men of those days to look back upon them with reverence. Derived from races respectively distinguished as the champions of National freedom, of Civil freedom, and of Religious freedom, the people in whom their principles were associated and combined, could not but experience a most favorable effect upon their manners, from the expansion of their minds, and their ideas: and the enforced habit of yielding the little peculiarities and prejudices which might be offensive, or even unpleasant to others, created an enlargement of benevolence, and liberality of conduct, which excluding exclusiveness, fitted them for the reception of strangers; and thus their numbers were rapidly augmented by an influx from all countries, of those who were enabled to avail themselves of the natural advantages of the place, while they were received with more cordiality, mingled with more freedom, and were more thoroughly incorporated with the citizens, than would have been possible in any unmixed population.

These liberal and cordial manners, in connection with the peculiar position and character of the three races, at that time producing a high tone of feeling and morals, may be accounted the *third* cause of the rapid, and at the same time, solid development of this vicinity. The *fourth* may be found in their *public polity and laws*.

The *public polity* was essentially based upon the English Constitution, influenced, modified, and I may add, liberalized by the Dutch and French associations. The imitation of the English Constitution was, however, by no means servile. A colony or province they admitted themselves to be; but they distinguished colonies from dependencies, and provinces from servitudes. The European Colonial System, as it is denominated by publicists, which has attained so gigantic a stature, was then in its infancy. The principle upon which the Greek colonies, and the Roman provinces and colonies were established, was little understood, and less regarded. Spain, Portugal, France, Holland, and England, were grasping at an immense control over the newly-discovered portions of the world, which, under the fair-sounding name of colonial dependance, should establish actual political servitude over vast regions of this globe. The real object was, by means of commercial advantages, to aggrandize the mother country, without much reference to the rights or interests of the colonists. The lucid and upright mind of the Dutch Grotius had reflected on this subject, and seen it in its proper light. In his great work, he devotes but few sentences to colonial relations; but those sentences are convincing and decisive. He adopts distinctly the sentiments found in the old writers, Thucidides, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, "that colonists should be treated as equals, and not as tributaries or dependants;" and that the maxim, "that colonists by a species of

*natural necessity* must be subject to the mother country," has no foundation either in justice or in reason.\* This was a great truth; a knowledge of which would have saved modern nations, masses of treasure, and rivers of blood. This Colonial System, so arrogant in its inception, and mischievous in its effects, was not received with favor here. The people of New-York, so far as I know, were the first among these Cis-Atlantic provinces, *publicly* and *clearly* to *assert their independence of all foreign legislation*, and utterly to repudiate the prevailing doctrine of colonial servitude. Virginia, Massachusetts, and Connecticut, had *intimated* the justice of the rule in various ways; but New-York was, I think, the *first to announce* it by legislative enactment. The very first act of the Assembly of 1691, was the promulgation of this principle; and it did so in the most unequivocal language, when saving their allegiance to the reigning sovereigns, they declared that under no pretence whatever should external power be exercised within this province.†

The general tone of their legislation was in harmony with the independence exhibited on this occasion; and displayed wisdom, moderation, and liberality. The laws provided ample security for persons and property; protected morals; promoted those physical conveniences which encourage industry, and augment wealth; made a prudent provision for the energetic and efficient administration of

\* Grot. de Jure, B. & P., L. 2, c. 9, § 10.

† Laws, 1691, chap. 1. See Note 3, *post*.



justice; and allowed a free exercise of religious worship, with the single exception of the distrusted and detested heresy of Rome. Nor should we wonder at this exception: for the dreadful scenes which had been enacted both in England and on the Continent, and the frightful disasters from which the people had escaped, warned them to beware, how they admitted into the State persons professing tenets, which appeared to be incompatible with order, secure government, or morals. The laws thus assured to individuals coming hither, advantages, political, social, domestic, and religious, which could with difficulty, perhaps could not at all, elsewhere be found within the limits of the American settlements; and in this way, the Four Causes of Geographical Position, Races, Manners, and Polity, laid the foundation of a growth and prosperity, which have certainly been developed in a very remarkable degree.

How far these causes still subsist, may be a matter of serious reflection. Our physical advantages still exist in an eminent degree: our readiness to receive strangers, and to advance them, even to the exclusion of the sons of the soil, has become proverbial: but whether the tone of morals be as pure, whether legislation be as prudent and judicious, may well be doubted: and although the prospect of wealth, and a hospitable reception, will for a long time draw numbers to us, and we may still appear to be prosperous; such prosperity cannot endure where morals are low, or legislation is unsound. "Trade," said a learned prelate of the English

Church a hundred years ago, commenting on the splendor and the fall of Tyre,\* “trade is a fluctuating thing. It passed from Tyre to Alexandria, from Alexandria to Venice, from Venice to Antwerp, from Antwerp to Amsterdam and London.” He described it as a sensitive and tender plant; and particularly cautioned those engaged in it against licentiousness, which leads to anarchy, riot, tumults, debauchery, extravagance, and meanness; and brings ruin upon credit, commerce, and liberty itself. “Neither kingdoms,” he added, “nor commonwealths, neither public companies, nor private persons, can long carry on a beneficial, flourishing trade without virtue, and what virtue teacheth, sobriety, industry, frugality, modesty, honesty, punctuality, humanity, charity, the love of our country, and the fear of God. The Prophets will inform us how the Tyrians lost it; and the like causes will always produce the like effects.”

The lesson which this wise man has taught us, should not, my fellow-members, and fellow-citizens, fall upon deaf or undiscerning ears. When we are called upon to display the glories of this “great Babylon which we have built,” our hearts swell with vanity and exultation. We point to the multitude and the magnificence of our marine, encircling like a forest, our extended shores; to the tributary cities and villages scattered around, whose clustering roofs and tall and tapering spires are reflected in the smooth waters of the rivers and the bay; lines of warehouses, groaning with the productions of the

\* Newton on the Prophecies.

whole globe; palatial marts, controlling the commerce of the country, and influencing the movements of the world; leagues of expensive edifices, furnished and adorned with every luxury that ostentation can devise, or art produce; shops, the architectural decorations and internal equipments of which are designed and adapted to dazzle and delight; a stupendous aqueduct, rivaling the grandeur of imperial Rome; to the display of every convenience that ingenuity can devise, and every luxury that affluence can desire; to our immense wealth, increasing magnitude, and boundless prospects; to our progress in arts and elegance, our advance, as we suppose, in civilization: and for these we demand the respect, the admiration, and the homage of the world. But we forget that in proportion to the magnitude of our gifts, is the magnitude of our duties. We forget that all these things are absolutely idle, and will surely come to nought, if there be not a corresponding development of what alone is valuable, the good qualities of the mind and of the heart. If those qualities be not nurtured and matured, our physical acquisitions will be a silent and perpetual reproof; and their nurture and maturing should be felt to be the duty, not only of the community, as such, but of each individual, and especially of those on whom Providence has bestowed abundant means. To us, whose fathers here found their homes and their graves, and who look here to find the homes and the graves of ourselves and our children, these reflections cannot be without effect. To those who, coming

from without, have here found a welcome, affluence, and friends, I must not allow myself to doubt, that the suggestion alone has been wanting to induce them to devote to those purposes a portion of their ample means; that with this view they will here promote religious instruction, and foster profound and sound learning; and that they will hasten to discharge a debt, the payment of which is demanded alike by gratitude and duty. Could we be taught that the mind and the heart alone are worthy of our care; that the objects of this life are valueless save as they are the prelude of a life to come; and that acquisitions and possessions are nothing worth, except as instruments of kindness, and as means of good; we then would see that religion and learning are the only sure foundations of our welfare. *Then*, without neglecting or undervaluing the charms of elegant accomplishments, the pleasures of refined society, the indulgence in innocent luxuries, and the appreciation of beauty and grace in sight, in sound, or in whatever form presented, (a proper enjoyment of which Providence wisely designs to elevate the sentiments and humanize the heart,) *then* would we look elsewhere than to our physical greatness, for subjects of gratulation, and of pride. We would exhibit our churches sufficient in number, and ample in space, with open doors ever ready gratuitously to receive the poor, and desks prepared to instruct the ignorant and reform the vicious. We would point to their pastors, provided with means, not barely enough to eke out a miserable subsistence,

but liberally furnished, as almoners of our abundance, to relieve the destitute, whose wants can seldom reach the knowledge of their rich and busy brothers. We would show our overflowing libraries; our seminaries and establishments of learning and science, well endowed and well supported, commensurate in number and importance with the greatness of our abilities, with ample faculties adapted to acquire and to impart that liberal learning, without which all learning would soon cease to exist. We would seek to multiply our private charities in such a way that they might become instruments of real good. We would honor intelligence, integrity, and truth, and discountenance presumption, dishonesty, and falsehood, no matter how eminent or how powerful might be the individual in whom they appeared. We would, in a word, be constantly impressed with the conviction, that we have no right to expect a continuance of the great prosperity that has hitherto been granted to us, unless we employ it justly, beneficently, and for legitimate and proper purposes. Should we so employ it, we may hope that the greatness which we have attained, may still farther be augmented. Should we not so employ it, this very greatness will be a censure and a shame. We cannot expect the experience of history to be reversed in our favor. If we do well, we may look for good; but if we will follow the pernicious examples of Nineveh, and Babylon, and Tyre, we should neither be surprised nor murmur, if, when perhaps least looked for, we meet their fearful fate.

## NOTES.

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### NOTE 1.—Page 12.

Some doubt has been thrown upon the fact of the first discovery of this River by the Dutch. John Verazzano is supposed, in his voyage in 1524, to have entered the harbor, now of New-York. There is some obscurity in his relation; and although we cannot admit his description as clearly applicable to this harbor, neither can we wholly reject it. Be that as it may, upon the supposition that he did enter it, a mere visit, wholly unproductive and without consequences of any description, barely deserves to be mentioned. See *Verazzano's Voyage in 1524*, in New-York Historical Collections, 2d Series, Vol. I.

### NOTE 2.—Page 15.

In writing the foregoing sentence, I had particularly in my mind the work of Succaria, an Italian writer who condemned the slaughter of the unhappy Conradin; and of Albericus Gentilis, who filled the chair of Law in the University of Oxford. I did not intend either to underrate or omit the claims which Spain might possess to distinction from the labors of Francisco de Victoria, or of Dominic Soto, both of the University of Salamanca; or of Francisco Suarez, upon whom Sir James Mackintosh pronounced a marked eulogium.

### NOTE 3.—Page 22.

I think that I have given the fair interpretation to this Act. No reader of the annals of Colonial British America can be insensible to the high tone which pervaded the sentiments and distinguished the actions of the other colonies, and particularly Virginia, Massachusetts, and Connecticut, in the earlier times. Their words and actions display a noble chapter in History; and one which remains yet to be distinctly apprehended, and truly appreciated. That New-York participated in these sentiments cannot be doubted; nor that she intended to announce them, and was the first so to do, as stated in the text. In so doing she used guarded and loyal language; but it is manifest that the authority of *the British Parliament* was distinctly repudiated; and it is still more manifest, when taken in connection with the very next act, re-affirming many of the provisions of Magna Charta, and enunciating a Bill of Rights.





















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